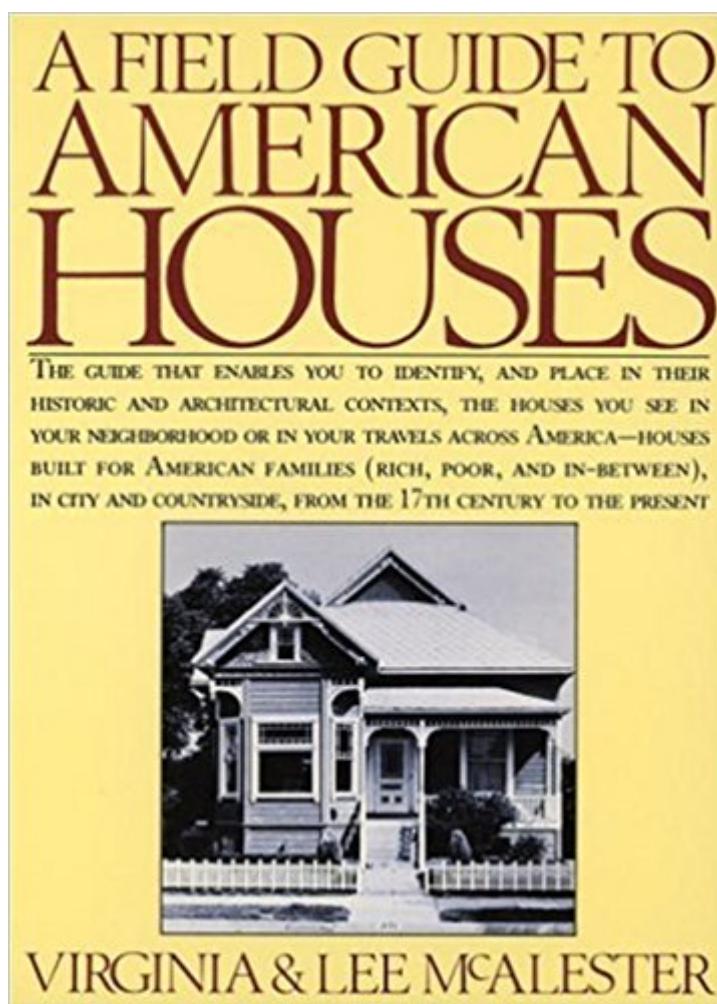


The book was found

A Field Guide To American Houses



Synopsis

The guide that enables you to identify, and place in their historic and architectural contexts, the houses you see in your neighborhood or in your travels across America. 17th century to the present.

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For the house lover and the curious tourist, for the house buyer and the weekend stroller, for neighborhood preservation groups and for all who want to know more about their community -- here, at last, is a book that makes it both easy and pleasurable to identify the various styles and periods

of American domestic architecture. Concentrating not on rare landmarks but on typical dwellings in ordinary neighborhoods all across the United States -- houses built over the past three hundred years and lived in by Americans of every social and economic background -- the book provides you with the facts (and frame of reference) that will enable you to look in a fresh way at the houses you constantly see around you. It tells you -- and shows you in more than 1,200 illustrations -- what you need to know in order to be able to recognize the several distinct architectural styles and to understand their historical significance. What does that cornice mean? Or that porch? That door? When was this house built? What does its style say about the people who built it? You'll find the answers to such questions here. This is how the book works: Each of thirty-nine chapters focuses on a particular style (and its variants). Each begins with a large schematic drawing that highlights the style's most important identifying features. Additional drawings and photographs depict the most common shapes and the principal subtypes, allowing you to see at a glance a wide range of examples of each style. Still more drawings offer close-up views of typical small details -- windows, doors, cornices, etc. -- that might be difficult to see in full-house pictures. The accompanying text is rich in information about each style -- describing in detail its identifying features, telling you where (and in what quantity) you're likely to find examples of it, discussing all of its notable variants, and revealing its origin and tracing its history. In the book's introductory chapters you'll find invaluable general discussions of house-building materials and techniques ("Structure"), house shapes ("Form"), and the many traditions of architectural fashion ("Style") that have influenced American house design through the past three centuries. A pictorial key and glossary help lead you from simple, easily recognized architectural features -- the presence of a tile roof, for example -- to the styles in which that feature is likely to be found. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

I always wanted to renovate an old house and purchased a beautiful Colonial Revival home built in 1915. My architect referred to the previous edition of this guide often during the renovation of my home. The new version proves without a doubt that the author is one of the nation's foremost authorities on architecture. There are so many beautiful illustrations that help people who learn visually like me, link terms with the actual architectural elements. The new guide has been updated to include all styles up to the present day. Not only is this book a must for students of architecture, but anyone who owns a house, is interested in buying a house, or is in the industry. Truly a masterpiece.

My dearly beloved is a big fan of houses. He loves to study the architecture and details of housing everywhere we go. So, when I saw this book reviewed in the Wall Street Journal, I knew it would be perfect for him. At the beginning of the book, there are charts with diagrams to help the reader identify the type of house he/she is looking at. For example, a sketch of a roof with a 2 or 3 word description, and the book recommends looking at one or more type of house to see which it is. However, it's also very good for reading, with chapters on the layouts of early towns and so forth. There is also a section on the housing used by various Native American groups. Each chapter about a style of houses includes a few pages of history, etc, before sketches, details about characteristics of the type, and photos of actual houses of each style from various parts of the country. Good for a long reading session, but it's also a fast and easy reference for when you just want to know what you've just seen.

After a decade of consulting my softbound copy of the earlier edition, I eagerly awaited this one. It is, at once, both familiar and new. My first impression was, "Wow, it's big; and heavy!" It's probably now out of the "field guide" category in the sense of portability. Perhaps the current one is similar to the hardbound 1st edition I never knew but the smaller, lighter softbound book was easier to toss under my arm and take off. I'm a clinical pharmacist by training - not an architect or architectural historian - so content accessibility is very important to me. Like the earlier edition, the book shines in this department but even brighter. I find the layout more logical, with the pictorial key and glossary up front, not buried in the early pages. At first I couldn't figure the organization of the pictorial key but now I see it's clearly aimed at the sidewalk house viewer, e.g., me. Start at what you can see over the hedge and work down: Roof form, Dormers, Roof-Wall Junction, Chimneys, Porches, Windows, etc. Unfortunately, the typeface for the category headers is less eye-catching in the new edition, making it harder to skim to your section. The meat and value of the book is in the text. I haven't read it all, being most interested in the styles found here in southern California, but the content is again extremely accessible to the average reader. There continues the excellent use of line drawings, many that have been improved from the 1st edition. The photographs are much clearer on fine white paper than they were on the buff colored pages of the softbound previous edition. In my selective review I notice there are some new house photos and some different photos of 1st edition houses. There are also some photos deleted in this edition - so don't throw away your 1st edition! If I had to pick a single best new feature of the book, it would be the 45-page chapter, "Neighborhoods: The Grouping of American Houses," with historic photos, aerial line drawings and elevations of neighborhood types, and discussion of the history, growth and problems of

neighborhood development. With some historic neighborhoods being nibbled to death by individual variances and code exceptions until they've lost their defining character, this chapter makes clear that individual houses - no matter how remarkable - are usually part of a collection worth recognition in its own right. Final assessment? This tome is no longer suitable for my backpack and the typeface choices make it less friendly for skimming but the expanded material is so good and so well integrated into the original [including the line drawings that look like they could have been there since 1984] that this "field guide" is still a must-have book for anyone interested in historic [or some-day historic] houses.

I love old houses so this review is based on that fact only (not an architectural student). This book is wonderful. It discusses and illustrates the styles of houses in the early days of our country to the present. There are detailed descriptions along with a plethora of photographs of all types of houses, my favorites being the Queen Anne, Tudor, and Gothic Revival (just a personal preference.) I think this is an amazing reference book, I would recommend it to anyone that loves old houses. In my case, because I was unfamiliar with a lot of the technical terms in McAlester's book, I also bought "Old House Dictionary", which helped immensely. Love this book.

This is probably the most-used resource book I have right now. I have the earlier edition and this is essentially the same thing with expanded sections of styles and sub-styles. Many pictures are updated, many more are the same. I especially like the line drawings at the start of each chapter that identify the key elements for a particular style. This book has been very helpful for my current client- I'm identifying the architectural styles of hundreds of non-historic, usually obscure style structures. Those key elements have been great to reference quickly since I usually have a pretty good idea what each structure might be. Because of this book, there are about fifteen structures in another state that my client is considering preserving now that we have identified something unique about them. As a preservationist, that gets me jazzed up!

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